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The Remonstrance

THOUGHTS

ON THE

PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.

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AT a time when we are threatened on all ſides with enemies, who wiſh to annihilate our Government, and rob us of that honour and power we have by our glorious conſtitution attained to in Europe, we ought to lay aſide party-quarrels, and unite as one man, for the defence of our country. We are a free people, and ought to be a happy people; but we ſuffer ourſelves to be led aſtray by men of perverted eloquence, and falſe arguments, who have their own ends to anſwer, without regard to national good; and many weak minds, who have no intereſt in view, are drawn aſide by the ſophiſtry of their fallacious arguments. I ſhall therefore, in

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theſe few ſheets, endeavour to ſet ſome of my countrymen to rights, by ſtating (as I apprehend) the nature of our conſtitution, which, if properly ſupported by ourſelves, may endure for ages. As I am of no party, I ſhall give my ſentiments freely. If, while I write for my own amuſement, I can give any information to others, I am amply paid for my trouble.

It will be unneceſſary to ſay, that this country underwent many revolutions, before this conſtitution was ſettled. The Danes, Saxons, and Normans, in their turn, invaded us: having conquered the country, it was divided amongſt their generals and officers, under the feudal tenure of ſervice; they were all ſoldiers, and ſoon became one army, and their general, or leader, was their king or chief. When theſe warriors were ſettled in the country, the military power became civil, and the officers and ſoldiers became noblemen, gentlemen, and peaſants, according to the ranks they bore in the army; when they became numerous, and had their own concerns to look after at home, they could not all attend at court, or head-quarters, to ſuperintend the concerns of the whole; but they elected repreſentatives from amongſt themſelves, to guard their rights; and had to pay them for their attendance in parliament. Of ſo little value was

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property at that time, that it was intruſted to a ſet of men, who were paid ſix and eight pence per day, while they attended. We had at that time no ſtanding army, every man was obliged to turn out when called upon. This became at laſt a grievance; men of rank, fortune, and property, did not wiſh to leave their peaceable babitations to follow a camp; they would rather pay for others to ſerve: By this means, a ſtanding army was formed. As property augmented, and became more precious, a Member of Parliament became a place of conſequence, and men of property were only intruſted with the public concerns. After many ſtruggles, the preſent conſtitution was formed, conſiſting of the Three Eſtates, King, Lords, and Commons; and it is the mutual intereſt of theſe three parts to ſupport one another. We have ſeen, that jealouſy of power in one part has often nearly deſtroyed the whole. Charles I. aſſumed a power over his Parliament, and would have reduced it to nothing; they, in return, took away the whole power of the Crown, which at laſt brought their Monarch to the block, and overſet the whole conſtitution, which they longed again to eſtabliſh: and notwithſtanding the nation flouriſhed, under the uſurper Cromwell; yet we were glad to call back the ſon to the throne, whoſe father we had murdered, and eſtabliſh again our old conſtitution.

If it was found neceſſary at that time to eſtabliſh the Three Eſtates, it becomes no leſs ſo now to give them our ſupport. The nation having acquired wealth, which is diſtributed through the whole, and links all together, makes all the three depend upon one another; the one cannot deſtroy the other, without deſtroying itſelf; the Crown muſt be ſupported, to be able to protect and ſupport the nation; it can make no other uſe of its power, without hurting itſelf. The Crown can do nothing of itſelf, not even if joined by the Peers, without the Commons, who are choſen by the country; men of property, and in whoſe judgement and integrity they can confide. The Miniſter muſt be choſen from among them; nor can he carry a ſingle vote without them; ſo that he may be conſidered as their Miniſter, and not the King's. If your Member differ from you in ſentiment, it is your own fault for ſending him; but when he is ſent, he muſt uſe his own judgement, and not be directed by you, how he is to vote: you have transferred your power to him, and cannot take it away during the ſeſſion, or till the King call a new Parliament; meetings and aſſociations to inſtruct Members, or reſolve upon affairs of State, is an inſult to your own Repreſentatives. All men are not of the ſame way of thinking; but a majority of voters muſt determine the whole, and that muſt be the voice

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of the nation; if every vote were to be unanimous, no act would ever pass, and the King must then be made absolute.

If Ministers or Members are needy men, who will sell themselves for place or pension, it is your own fault for sending such; but if they have property, that must suffer with yours, their loss on one side will balance their gain on the other; and, at any rate, it will be your own faults, if your Members join with a Ministry to hurt you; for when you oppose him, the King must dismiss him; the Minister being therefore your own choice, more than the King's, you ought to support him.

An Opposition is of great service to our constitution, and likewise to an honest Minister; they sift all his plans to the bottom, and may show him dangers that he did not advert to; but such an Opposition ought *only* to be a check to Ministers, not to introduce any thing rashly; but if a party against Government set up against Ministry, in *every case*, whether right or wrong, it loses the effect of an Opposition, and their arguments, however sophistical, are not attended to by the Minister, or his majority; and instead of being of service, they are a material hurt to the constitution, and nation at large; they alarm weak minds, and encourage our enemies to believe, that we are in a state of oppression, and may fall an easy prey to

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any banditti that will take the trouble to invade us. They preach up to an ignorant deluded people, that they are oppreſſed ſlaves; while they enjoy freedom and luxury, they pretend no man is free, who has not a vote for a Member of Parliament; that thoſe who are ſent to Parliament are moſtly bribed by Miniſtry, to vote with them; that the rotten boroughs are kept up, to give the Miniſter a majority; that by the miſconduct of the Miniſtry, the nation is brought to the brink of ruin, by an enormous national debt, which cannot fail to make us bankrupts.

To all theſe I ſhall anſwer, firſt, If every man in the kingdom had a vote, elections would be no ſecurity to property, votes would be at all prices, according the ſituation of the voter; they are too much an article of ſale already; none but men of real character and property ought to have a vote: an indigent man values a few guineas more than the intereſt of the nation; and, on the other hand, of what conſequence is it to me, whether I have a vote or not? the Parliament takes care of my concerns, as well as yours; the two thirds of the kingdom have no votes, the army, navy, and marine but few; yet the Parliament is as careful of them as of you. Bribery and corruption do not proceed alone from the Miniſter; if voters are ſo inſignificant and venal, as make a traffic of their privileges,

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he that condeſcends to buy them, will make his advantage of them; what a man buys, he has an undoubted right to ſell. There are only two ſhops that deal in this article, the Miniſter and Oppoſition; if the Oppoſition were not bidders, Miniſtry would have no occaſion to buy; they don't buy for themſelves, but for Government, as ſervants of the Crown, and to enable them to conduct the affairs of the nation. But it is the Oppoſition that puts a value upon votes; they make them a commodity of traffic, with which they intend to purchaſe the places under Government for themſelves; it is not the national intereſt they care for, it is their own; every ſtep the Miniſter takes, they muſt find fault with, though they themſelves would purſue the ſame ſteps, were they in their places; theſe are backed by many needy dependants, and many others of low rank, who have nothing to loſe, but might be gainers by any alteration. But beſide theſe, there are many others, independent good men, who would not ſell themſelves at any price, to either party, but from weak minds, and feeble nerves, are wrought upon by the florid ſpeeches, and falſe alarms, of the leading men of that party, and are fixed by the principles of fear, which determine their opinion, without leaving the leaſt opening for conviction, nor will they allow themſelves, either to read or hear any thing on the other

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As to the rotten boroughs, which they ſay are at the diſpoſal of the Miniſter, I ſhall only obſerve, that theſe boroughs had their day, and ſent Members to Parliament; and as their privileges remain ſtill a part of the conſtitution, I doubt whether they can be meddled with, while they are no way hurtful to the conſtitution. If the Miniſter has more intereſt with them than the Oppoſition, it muſt be a ſaving to Government, who are obliged to pay many for doing their duty to themſelves, and their country.

The Oppoſition alſo perſuade us we are bankrupts, by our national debt. Any man who can reaſon, will find, that this very national debt makes the bond and union of the nation; it connects all the parts of the conſtitution together, and all muſt ſtand or fall together; the whole property of the nation is in a fund; that fund is mortgaged to Government, for which we have their ſecurity; and by ſupporting them, we ſupport ourſelves. If a banker is run upon, and his creditors ſee that his affairs are good, and that he only wants time, they will ſupport him, that they may get twenty ſhillings in the pound, inſtead of ten; but what banker's ſecurity can be equal to Government's;

vernment's; if they fail, all is loſt, whether in their poſſeſſion, or our own. If every man had poſſeſſed his own property, as was the practice of old, we never ſhould have been the powerful nation we are; that property of ſpecie, that formerly lay hid and inactive, in the hands of individuals, is now lent to the Government, who pays us intereſt, upon which we live, and carry on an extenſive trade, without touching our capital, which ſtands ſecured to us, as long as we can ſecure our conſtitution, which never can fall while we will ſupport it.

Had the Emperor Conſtantine been ſupported by ſuch a fund, Mahomet would never have taken Conſtantinople; the merchants, and monied men, would part with none of their riches, to aſſiſt the Emperor; the city was taken, and they loſt both their money and their freedom.

The ſame might have been our caſe, but for our national debt; if every man were poſſeſſed of his own property at this moment, who would lend Government any thing, in her preſent ſituation? What then muſt be the conſequence? Our natural enemies would have eaſy acceſs amongſt us; and if they did not plunder our property as enemies, they would fraternize with us, and borrow it, never to be paid back, as they have done

in Italy; ſo that friends and foes ſhare the ſame fate, under different names.

But here I ſhall be told, by the diſaffected part of the nation, that the preſent Miniſtry brought us into this ſituation. It is not now the queſtion, how or in what manner we got into it, but to lend all our efforts to get out of it. The Miniſtry did nothing but by the voice of the majority of the nation; a diſcontented Minority cannot be called the voice of the nation. If the Miniſtry have been deceived in the ſteps they have taken, the voice of the nation has been deceived alſo, under whom they acted.

But if we examine fairly, yet ſcrupulouſly, into the conduct of Miniſters, from the beginning of this war, we ſhall not find the charge againſt them eſtabliſhed. Had our Miniſtry any hand in the French Revolution, or the murder of their King? His Ambaſſador, Chouvaline, remained in London during his life; on his death, his embaſſy was at an end; could we then accept of an Ambaſſador from any party at that time ruling in France? It was neither ſafe nor honourable: Although they threatened every Crowned Head, and offered aſſiſtance to all rebel ſubjects, and ſent incendiaries into the heart of our country, to ſow ſedition amongſt us, yet we refrained from touching them, till they ſhould ſettle ſome ſort of Government among

among themſelves, from whom we might receive an Ambaſſador. But our peaceable conduct was not ſufficient; becauſe we would not have an Ambaſſador from them, forced down our throats on the 2d of February 1793, they declared war againſt us and Holland. The Britiſh Miniſtry was ignorant of this ſtep, till Lord Grenville had notice by expreſs from Oſtend, which was publiſhed officially the 9th: How then can it appear, that Great Britain was the aggreſſor, and provoked the war? We were now engaged in a war, whether we would or not, with a licentious party, not with a Government; with a nation divided amongſt themſelves, amongſt whom we had many friends. Our firſt ſtep was to ſuccour Holland, which we effectually did at that time, and the Imperial army relieved Brabant. The allied army then took Valenciennes, on which they diſplayed the Imperial flag; this opened the eyes of the emigrants, who were ſtill Frenchmen: they then ſaw, that it was not to eſtabliſh their ancient Government we were fighting, but to parcel out their kingdom among ourſelves. Dunkirk was intended for us, if we could take it: many returned; and many more, who would have joined us, were reconciled to the governing party, rather than ſee their country become a prey to foreigners. This proves to have been an ill concerted plan; but whether it

was planned by us, or our allies, is not publicly known; we always ſee our miſtakes when it is too late; often the beſt as well as the worſt projected plans will miſcarry; perhaps, had that little army of ours, which we employed to little purpoſe amongſt the fortified towns of France, been landed in La Vendee, to ſupport that army of Royaliſts, it might have anſwered our purpoſe better; but we proved too late in that expedition, and it failed. But are Miniſtry to anſwer for the failure of theſe plans? as well may a general anſwer for the loſs of a battle. I doubt not but every ſtep that was taken by the then Miniſtry, would have been proſecuted by the Oppoſition, had they been in; for the voice of the houſe muſt have alſo directed them.

The French being a numerous nation, and their Convention taking arbitrary ſteps, of making all the kingdom ſoldiers on requiſition, ſoon overpowered our armies, and drove us out of Flanders and Holland, and carried victory into the heart of Germany. For want of trade, all were become ſoldiers, and could exiſt, while they could plunder: Germany and Italy ſupported them, while they were victorious; but when they are drove back in Italy, as they have been in Germany, or when they have exhauſted that country, and cannot ſubſiſt their armies there, their great armies

mies muſt then periſh: France can neither pay them, nor feed them; ſo that, in the end, her conqueſts will ruin her, as it did Rome of old: France has diſpoſed of all her public domains, ſhe has ſold the forfeited eſtates, and all is ſpent; ſhe has no trade to help her Treaſury; ſhe is deſtitute both of money and credit; that ſhe can carry on a war much longer, is merely impoſſible. It is true, ſhe has hitherto held it out beyond human expectation; but it is only putting the evil day afar off; and I am convinced, were it not for our Oppoſition, and malcontents, who keep up their ſpirits, and endeavour to depreſs ours, by a miſſtatement of both our ſituations, they would long ago have ſued for a peace.

Are we ſo blind, as not to ſee the difference of our ſituations? Britain having the trade of the world in her hands, and France without any; yet to patch up a diſhonourable peace, with a party that cannot inſure us a peace, we would give up all our conqueſts, that has doubled our trade. By giving them up, we enable France again to rival us, and threaten us with another war. It grieves me much, to hear Members of both Houſes ſpeak ſo lightly of our Weſt India conqueſts, and depreciate the value of that moſt valuable iſland Hiſpaniola; that alone raiſes more ſugar than all the Weſt India iſlands put together. I do not ſo much

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rely on my own knowledge, as on that of Abbe Reynal, who gives a fair account of its imports and exports. By the Spaniſh inhabitants giving up that part of it, called St Domingo, and having conquered the half of what the French poſſeſſed, we may daily look for the whole falling into our hands.

Becauſe there has been of late a malignant fever raging amongſt theſe iſlands, that has been fatal to many of our troops, we are not to deſert the iſlands, nor the conqueſts we have made. A plague raged once in London, but we did not deſert it on that account: I have been in moſt of the Weſt India iſlands, I ſaw no yellow fever; I was ſome years at Jamaica, where we had daily intercourſe with Hiſpaniola, then as healthy a climate as any in the Weſt Indies. Muſt theſe valuable conqueſts be ſacrificed for a wretched peace, that may not laſt ſix months? Can the preſent party in France tell, whether the next that comes in will confirm their treaty? Or, if Buonaparte ſhould turn Protector, whether he will confirm your peace? France at preſent has no fixed Government; and inſtead of fixing it by a peace, ſhe will then be left to the horrors of a civil war, which will new-model her Government. And we, who have been her natural enemy for many

many years back, have little favour to expect from any party that may be uppermoſt.

Peace, I allow, is a deſirable thing, but gold may be bought too dear: if we are to ſacrifice ſo much for it, it ought to be ſecured to us; and who can ſecure it? When we have given France up half our trade, with our conqueſts, laid up our ſhips, diſbanded our army, their reſtleſs diſpoſitions, added to the hatred they bear us, may induce them to take us at this diſadvantage, when we are no way prepared. They are a nation of armed men, always prepared; and, if they attempted to invade us in the face of a ſuperior fleet, what may they do when we have no fleet? We muſt therefore be upon our guard, and keep up our fleets and armies, to ſecure us againſt a lawleſs ſet of men, whom no treaty can bind, and keep up a war-eſtabliſhment in time of peace, with only half our trade and commerce to ſupport it. When we view things in this light, we muſt be mad to give away a certainty for an uncertainty; if we are to be at a war-expence, let us continue the war; we are not ſo much reduced as to force us to an uncertain, diſhonourable peace. Their only hopes are founded on our fears. We have offered them every thing back, if they will deliver back to our ally, the Emperor, the Netherlands. Since they have rejected this offer, our

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only ſafety depends on ſupporting the Emperor, to force them to deliver up the Netherlands, and drive them from Italy. Theſe hopes are far from being vague; the Emperor can find men, if we help to pay them; we may reimburſe ourſelves by foreign conqueſts, and have no equivalent to give up on a peace. Though they may over-run and plunder Italy, they cannot hold it. The Pope may cede to them half of his territory, to ſave the reſt; but is it poſſible for them to keep it? It muſt be conquered, and fall to the Emperor as a conqueſt from the French. Their day in Italy is near a cloſe, they have already eat it up, and muſt retire for ſupplies; the Auſtrians can bring with them what they want, and they advance among friends, who are heartily tired of French liberty; their neutral friends will turn their bittereſt enemies, the moment they can be covered by an Imperial army; and their retreat from Italy muſt be rapid and ruinous.

But let us ſuppoſe the worſt, that our fears ſhould get the better of our prudence, and make us moſt diſhonourably deſert our good ally the Emperor, which may force him to a very diſgraceful peace, and all the continent ſhould be ſubjugated under French tyranny, what ſort of a peace are we to expect with that haughty people? They will then take advantage of our fears, and

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get any terms they pleaſe to aſk. Now, if we would give ourſelves time to think, and reaſon on our ownſituation, we ſhould ſee, in ſpite of all the falſe reaſonings of a diſcontented party, that we have nothing to fear from France, ſhould ſhe be miſtreſs of the continent, while we are miſtreſs of the ſea, which all her conqueſts cannot prevent. Suppoſe all the force of France turned againſt Britain, it is out of their power to hurt us, while the channel divides us, and our fleets command that channel. You may ſuppoſe millions of French troops, aſſembled along their coaſt, from the Bay of Biſcay to the Texel: Firſt, their reſources muſt be greater than they are, to fit out ſuch an armament; all the ſhips they can procure will not be ſufficient to bring over any number at one time, to annoy us: And ſuppoſe they had ten thouſand tranſports, to bring over two hundred and eighty thouſand men, which is the proportion of five hundred tranſports, which King William employed to bring over fourteen thouſand, when he came to Britain; a ſuperior fleet can deſtroy this great armament in a few hours. Suppoſe it poſſible, that they may evade our fleet, and get to ſea, as they did on the Iriſh expedition, they cannot conceal themſelves; till their whole debarkation is effected, they could not have time to cover their landing. I am convinced, had the weather permitted them to land in

Ireland, before they completed it, both their army and navy muſt have been deſtroyed.

An invading army muſt be ſupported by a fleet, till they have ſecured themſelves in places of ſafety and defence: Had the banditti the French landed in Wales been ſupported a day or two, by the ſhips who landed them, they might have ſecured themſelves in ſome poſt; and if they found they could make no impreſſion, they might have done us much damage, and embarked; but when they ſaw they were deſerted by their ſhips, they loſt heart, and laid down their arms, to a handful of militia: So muſt it happen, to every invading army, if they are not covered by their fleet. Now, let us inquire, how any ſuch army can get from any port in France, their troops; and what ſhips they have are diſperſed along their whole extenſive coaſt, as far as the Texel. It is poſſible to march theſe troops to any port for embarkation; but it is not poſſible to get a ſufficient number of tranſports aſſembled at any one port. Suppoſing they had a ſufficient number at the different ports, our fleets and cruiſers are ſtationed along their whole coaſt; the weather that obliges them to keep off their coaſt, blocks up their ſhips in their harbours; the wind that permits them to come out, enables our cruiſers to work in ſhore, in ſmooth water. If a gale of wind, either eaſt or weſt, drive our ſhips to leeward, off their ſtation,

the ſame gale, ſhould they puſh out, will alſo drive them to leeward, in the face of our cruiſers: So that neither troops, nor empty tranſports for any other port, can venture out. Were their ports not thus guarded, they might fix upon a day of ſailing from the different ports, wind and weather permitting, and appoint a rendezvous on ſome part of our coaſt; but this they cannot do, unleſs our cruiſers abandon every port, and then they muſt be on our own coaſt, to receive them.

Notwithſtanding the improbability, I may ſay impoſſibility, of the French invading this country, with any number to annoy us, I would have us prepared to repel any ſuch attempt, if ever it ſhould take place: when a man is armed in his own defence, it gives him courage. A company of armed ſoldiers will drive a thouſand of unarmed men before them. Every man ought to have arms put into his hands, to defend his own property; there may be many malcontents amongſt us, that wiſhes no good to either King or Miniſtry, who would ſtill defend himſelf againſt a foreign enemy, who came to take his property, and deſtroy his country. And were there ſtill amongſt them ſuſpected perſons, I would alſo give them arms, and put them in the ranks; there they are ſecured from doing us harm; they cannot deſert: if they are properly officered,

officered, they muſt march with the reſt, and will fire again, if they are fired at.

I had a proof of this laſt war: I was chartered to carry to Jamaica, from New York, one hundred and twelve of a new corps raiſed for Government; they conſiſted of all the deſerters from the enemy, fellows from the priſon-ſhips, all the villains from the different jails; all theſe banditti were ſent on board, under a guard of ſoldiers: With ſuch a crew, I could effect no inſurance at New York; every one was ſure theſe fellows would run away with the ſhip: and a few days after I ſailed, it was reported, they had carried my ſhip into Philadelphia, and delivered her up to the Americans. I had but few ſeamen, and employed many of theſe fellows to aſſiſt in working the ſhip: I quartered them all at the guns and ſmall arms. I was a letter of mark, mounted with twenty two guns: I called all hands, and told them, I knew they were a ſet of blackguards; but I knew every dog of them would fight for a good prize. After blackguarding them for ſome time, in their own language, I ordered them two or three buckets of grog: they gave me three cheers, and ſwore to a man, they would ſtand by me, while the ſhip could ſwim. We paſt the Dutch fleet, but did not know any thing of the war, though we ſaw ſoon after the two men of war in chaſe of them; who took the whole fleet next morning: which had

had I known, and joined them, I am ſure theſe fellows would have ſtood by me to the laſt. Show us our natural enemies, who wiſh to deſtroy our country, we then forget our party-quarrels, and unite in the common defence.

It is not a time to inquire into the cauſes of the war, or whether Miniſtry at firſt might have prevented it: I am apt to think they could not; but this is not a time for inquiry. But how we are to get out of it with honour? Can a change of Miniſtry get us a better peace? Muſt not every Miniſtry ſupport Government, and Government muſt protect the nation, and the nation ſtand by Government? Would France look upon our Oppoſition as their friends, when they became Britiſh Miniſters? Would theſe men ſell their country, for a diſhonourable peace? I have not that opinion of them; they will do now, what they durſt not do: Were they Miniſters, do you think France would give them better terms than ſhe would Mr Pitt? No, but ſhe would expect more humiliating offers from them, if they can draw the Parliament after them; without whom, a Miniſtry can do nothing. It is not therefore the Miniſtry, it muſt be the voice of the nation, that muſt ſacrifice our liberties, for a diſhonourable peace; if we change, we may change for the worſe, and not for the better.

To petition the King, to diſmiſs his Miniſters at this

this time, would be offering a groſs inſult to his Majeſty, a great affront to his Moſt Honourable Privy Council, by whoſe advice he chooſes theſe Miniſters, and a ſevere reflection on the Noble and Honourable Members of both Houſes of Parliament, who have ſtood by, and ſupported theſe Miniſters hitherto. But above all, it is diſgracing the Britiſh Nation, to wiſh to remove a ſet of Miniſters who have ſo long ſupported the honour and dignity of the nation, and repelled a troubleſome, licentious enemy; who, I may ſay, makes all the world, but us, tremble. It is like humbling ourſelves before France, and ſaying, We humbly beg for peace, at any rate: We have got the Miniſters removed, who talked to you of honourable conditions; you may now propoſe your own terms, keep Belgium, it never belonged to us: all that we have taken from you, we will give you back, though it be parting with the half of our trade; and rather than not enjoy the bleſſings of peace, we will give you a few millions: And ſhould you want a few more to borrow, we know your ſecurity is good: for though we are a poor ruined nation, on the eve of bankruptcy, yet you will find it worth your while, to fraternize with us, and mix a little of your French Anarchy with our Engliſh Liberty.—Thoſe petitioners ought to be looked upon as enemies to their country.

FINIS.

Tolerable Read